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ABSTRACT

A model of adult education appears to function in the outreach programs of three Columbus (Ohio) performing arts organizations. The first tier represents the arts organization's board of trustees, and the second represents the internal administration of the company. Two administrative bodies are arbitrarily labelled as education and marketing, which may or may not exist as separate entities in each organization. The responsibilities of these units or of the general administration encompass a wide variety of education activities, both formal and informal. The third tier of the model represents the personnel who carry out (and sometimes receive) education and training. For performing arts companies, marketing, or any promotional activity, is seen as having an educative function in that it increases awareness of and knowledge regarding the arts. Although education is seen overall as secondary to performance, it is seen as a vital component in the promotional activities related to the performance. Educational activities are described as important in the efforts of audience building and attracting funding and sponsorship. The future of the three companies is dependent on accessibility to the art. Arts education is a key to lifelong learning, leisure activity, and a mutually beneficial relationship between the performing arts and the host community. (YLB)

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For the Arts to have Meaning...

A Model of Adult Education in Performing Arts Organizations

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"Art is a way of perceiving and responding." (Farber, 1982:10) The "arts" are those fields of study in which creators, performers, technicians, and audience come together. (Becker, 1976) Using this definition, one can describe the productions of theatre, dance, opera and music as the performing arts where the four necessary components most successfully meet.

In the culture of the United States, the arts are viewed as a leisure as opposed to a work pursuit for most people. There is, however, a "work value" ethic in this society that reduces leisure to a trivial level. (Verduin and McEwen, 1984) Yet, as Kaplan (1960:3) notes, "an increasing number of adult students...now come seeking educational and intellectual experiences in the liberal arts...purely for their own satisfaction and intellectual development". Verduin and McEwen (1984) also stress the value of liberal arts and leisure education by pointing out that while leisure education is one of the seven principles of secondary eduction, little is done to educate youth in this area. Indeed, the arts and music are often the first programs eliminated from schools in times of financial stress.

For the arts to have meaning, there must be a commitment to the arts in lifelong learning. Browne (1973:2) suggests, "once you separate art from the useful purpose it was designed to serve and put it in a museum it becomes dead and adoration of it is worship of a stuffed animal, a corpse". Sontag (1973:27) adds, "the most interesting and creative art of our time is <u>not</u> open to the generally educated; it demands special effort; it speaks a specialized

language" implying the need for education in lifelong appreciation of the arts. Verduin and McEwen (1984:112) sum this importance by saying "learning and self discovery are perhaps the greatest of all leisure potentials. They add meaning to our lives and contribute to our personal satisfaction". Dicke (1974:43) simply notes that the "appreciability of a work of art...is potential value which in a given case may never be realized". Finally, Morison and Dalgleish (1987:101) in their counter to the 'purist view' that one need not know anything about art to appreciate art, reflect that "opening up attitudes toward new ideas and experiences that challenge the mind and the imagination seems particularly important in helping people feel comfortable with the arts".

Van Almen Connel (1977) identifies four broad objectives in education regarding the arts: 1) to develop increased tolerance for differences; 2) to accept people as they are within their own adjustments to their own environments; 3) to develop a perspective through anthropology with an awareness of ethnocentric behavior; and 4) to understand how humans are distinctly human (1977). Two factors complicate the view that children schooled in arts appreciation will not need lifelong learning experiences. First, the arts are dynamic. Art changes; even historic works change with each new viewing. Performance is temporal and relies on the willing suspension of disbelief when the audience meets the performers. Second, as indicated above, the grounding we, as adults, had in the arts is often inadequate-- even as we remove criticism and arts appreciation from primary and secondary curricula.

The responsibility then falls on the arts organizations themselves, those actually responsible for the performances, to provide this lifelong education. The goal in education is not necessarily altruistic; rather it is for attracting the "potential" audience (Morison & Dalgleish, 1987). Leonard

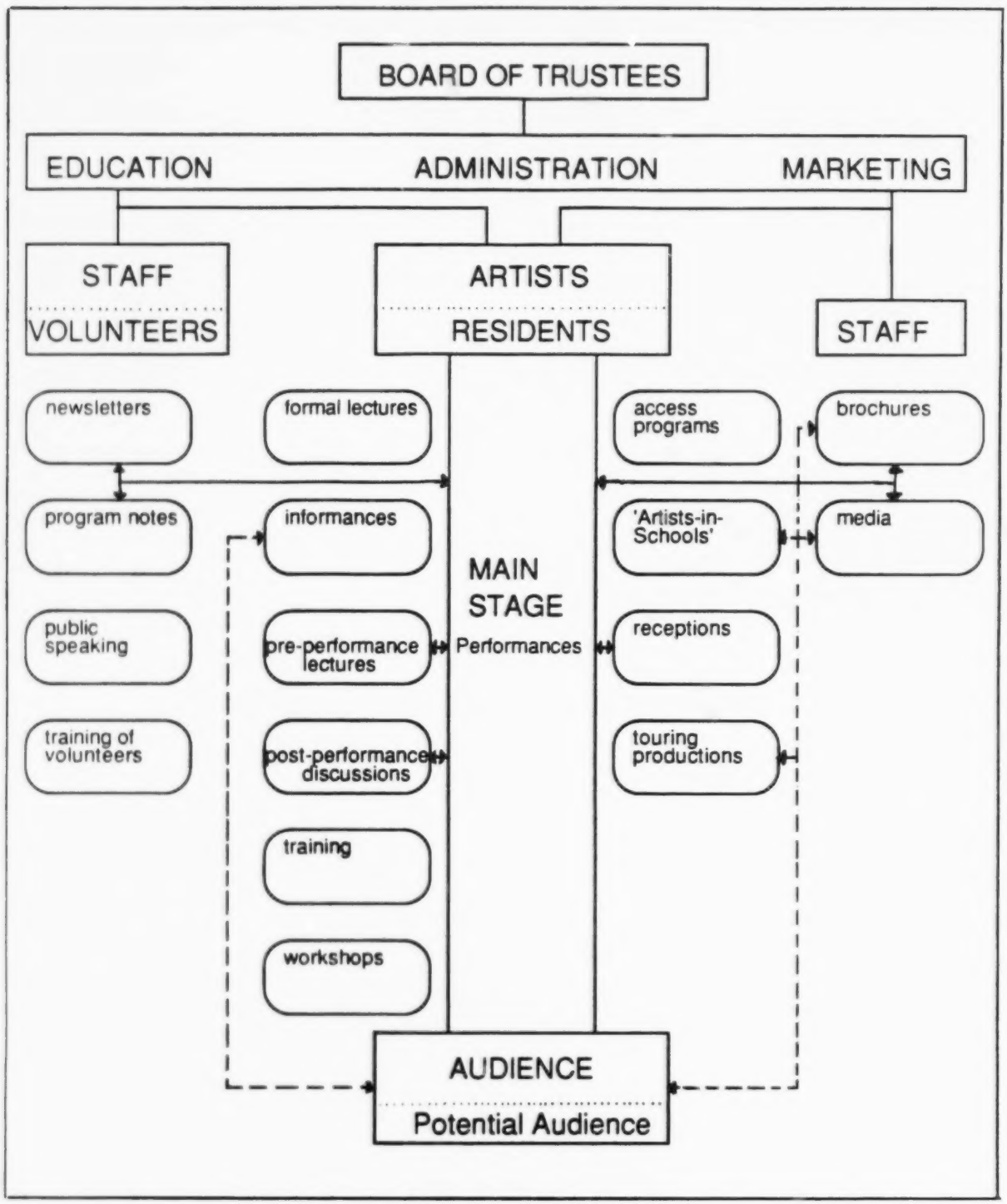
Bernstein, in the introduction to his book The Joy of Music (1959) supports the need for education and audience building by commenting, "the public is not a great beast, but an intelligent organism, more often than not longing for insight and knowledge". Much of the education is in the performance, the works performed, and in getting the people through the door.

With this background, a cursory examination of three performing arts organizations in Columbus, Ohio was made. What follows is a presentation of a performing arts organization "model" of adult (that is, non-school) education; a discussion of the three organizations and the application of the model to their programs; and a look toward the future efforts of adult education through the arts.

The Model

Our interviews with the educational directors of three Columbus based performing arts organizations (Goldsmith, 1988; Wickersham, 1988; Thomas, 1988) has led us to propose a model of adult education that appears to function, in a general way, in all three. While both the internal organization and a number of administration units differ in each company, we found the responsibilities of the education staff and the marketing staff to be closely related. At times, their activities (and the personnel) were identical, and no attempt was made by the administrators to separate the two.

Figure 1 illustrates the model of adult education as we perceive it to function in the performing arts outreach programs. The first tier represents the Arts Organization Board, while the second represents the internal administration of the company. Two administrative bodies are arbitrarily labelled as Education and as Marketing- these may or may not exist as separate



Solid lines refer to activities related to main stage performances.
Dashed lines refer to activities that target learners directly.

Figure 1: A Model of Community Education in Performing Arts Organizations.

entities. For example, both Opera/Columbus and the Columbus Symphony Orchestra (CSO) have educational directors with well defined responsibilities, while the Contemporary American Theatre Company's (CATCO) educational programs are more integrated into the general administration. In either case, the responsibilities of these units or of the general administration encompass a wide variety of education activities, both formal and informal.

The third tier of the model represents the personnel who carry out (and sometimes receive) education and training. In addition to the professional staff, some of whom are trained in education, volunteers serve as docents for the CSO, and Opera/Columbus plans to use these in the near future. Docents at the CSO are trained to provide instruction in the public schools through a program entitled 'Great SEATS' (SEATS = Symphony Education and Audience Training in the Schools) (Thomas, 1988). Volunteer subject matter specialists serve as panelists for CATCO's post-performance discussion sessions, during which the audience is invited to discuss the issues raised by the plays (Goldsmith, 1988). Equally prominent players in the educational arena are the artists themselves. Artists participate in pre- and post-performance lectures, discussions, formal lecture series and receptions as well as touring productions and the 'Artists-in-Schools' programs. When there is direct artist involvement, it may be the performing artist or an understudy or associate. Opera/Columbus offers a twelve week residency program for 'Associate artists', in which six singers can participate in workshops and outreach programs. The outreach activities were described as 'informances', during which the associate artist speaks about opera and performs shortened versions of operatic pieces (Wickersham, 1988).

We have attempted to categorize the individual activities of the various

personnel under the headings of education and marketing, although in practice these often overlap. A key to understanding the model is acknowledging the strong relationship between the two- our interviews led us to conclude that in effect, for performing arts companies, education= promotion= marketing. Marketing, or any promotional activity, is seen as having an educative function in that it increases awareness of and knowledge regarding the arts. Even the selection of works was seen to be a component in this equation. The plays chosen by the artistic director of CATCO are selected, in part, for their educational value (Goldsmith, 1988). Once during the run of each play, the audience is invited to stay after the performance and debate the issues raised by interacting with a panel of guest speakers. Similarly, the brochures used by Opera/Columbus to enhance awareness of its offerings and the program notes provided at each performance are intended to be educative (Wickersham, 1988).

Additional examples of individual activities as described by the interviewees include the CSO's 'Celebrities of Note' lecture series (four lectures that reach a wide audience" and the newsletters used by Opera/Columbus and CATCO to inform their subscribers about upcoming events, including the history and background of the productions and performers.

The literature suggests that the media, including radio, television and newspapers can be used for both informative and for advertisement purposes. Critical analysis by local performing arts critics can also become a part of the educative material that reaches the public, and as such, the companies have an interest in keeping the critics well informed. Morison and Dalgleish (1987:70) include the media in the 'Strategy to Encourage Lifelong Learning' in the arts. While none of those interviewed spoke directly to this issue, we feel it may be something they would care to look into.

Of interest was the observation that while education was seen overall as secondary to performance, it was seen as a vital component in the promotional activities related to the performance. Educational activities were described as important in the efforts of audience building, for attracting new audience segments (senior citizens, the television-bound middle class (Browne, 1973)) as well as a means to attract funding and sponsorship. Innovation in educational projects was cited as a key element in obtaining grants, with the ultimate aim of increasing the reach of the performing arts company into the community. In general, then, the learners in the adult education programs in the arts will be present and potential audience members. The model therefore includes the main stage performance as the centerpiece for the performing arts educational outreach program (Morison & Dalgleish, 1987). Solid arrows in Figure 1 refer to educational or educative activities that are related to performances, while dashed arrows refer to educational or educative activities that target learners directly.

Directions for the Future

Given that the goal of performing arts is realized in continued performing, what are the "dreams" of persons involved in the audience building and marketing of the arts? Logically, the answer must be increased performance and more performance opportunity.

In the three arts organizations discussed above, the wish lists were very much related to the stage of each organization in its life process. In the case of CATCO, the young company desires a larger space that can hold more audience and a resident company. Support for the resident company will be enabled by a larger audience with an expanded season; the expanded season will

encourage more subscription and point-of-entry theatre goers. Audience maintenance and building around the central "main stage" is of primary concern. Also with resident company members comes the potential for more workshops, classes, and seminars for "would be" actors, technicians and interested audience members.

Opera/Columbus, which is in a "young adult" phase of organization, would like to expand its capacity to "tour" and take the art of opera to smaller cities and communities where live opera is not readily available. This is a useful approach to audience building, as the opportunity for the audience is normally a barrier to participation. By removing this barrier, more "potentials" are exposed to the art form and by sheer number, more will become supporters.

The CSO is a more mature organization in terms of organizational life. Long term goals are to eventually have nearly all performers on retainer with only occasional contract players. As the organization is now at nearly full performance "load", a possible future direction for expanding performance is to have more, smaller neighborhood performances. Take the art to the people to expand the audience- much like the approach of Opera/Columbus. Continued audience building is also approached by activities such as the offerings of multiple series and of special programs. These have a tremendous seating potential for ticket buyers, and can attract first-time symphony goers.

At any given time, these and other arts organizations may address any or all of the five aims and objectives of adult education (Darkenwald & Merriam, 1982). Cultivation of the intellect and individual self-actualization can be direct outcomes of an adults' pursuit of knowledge in the arts. Personal and social improvement or social transformation can result from exposure to new or

provocative ideas, new leisure activities and cultural pursuits. And of key concern to the arts organization is the aim of organizational effectiveness, including growth and development of the performing arts.

In all three cases, accessibility to the art is of primary importance. Breaking down preconceived notions of theatre, concerts and opera, which are often barriers to participation by adults, is the reality of education for the arts. By exposing people to new ideas, challenging where people are now, empowering them through the arts and increased understanding of the arts, arts education is a key to lifelong learning in general, leisure activity in the present and a mutually beneficial relationship between the performing arts and the host community.

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